(77 b)

? (25 March 1917)

Charleston
Firle
Sunday

My Billy.

Thank you very much for your invitation which of course I am much too conceited to think purely unselfish. Besides I'm really living most luxuriously now. I stretch myself in front of the fire & never give a thought to the inner workings of the house once I've ordered dinner. The worst of it is though that I think that Clive & Mary may be coming here just about then. I'm not quite sure yet when they do want to come but they said after Easter which I suppose may mean about the 10th & I think they may be going to stay a week – or anyhow several days. So I might not be able to come to you or I might be able to come for a day or two. Can I let you know later? Anyhow I shall see you even if I can't come to stay. It's as easy as anything to

bicycle over to you now. I hope too you'll bring your strange party over here one day perhaps to tea, dinner & a moonlight walk back over the downs. We should like to see old Spunto again - & we've never seen or imagined Charles in the country. I hope he still has white clothes with black spots.

I didn't manage to see Walter, but I'm coming up again on Thursday. to bring back the little Blanco & take the boys to the dentist. & I shall stay 2 nights I expect. & have written to ask when I can see him. I don't know whether I shall have time to see you - shall I? - I'm going to get my room at Gordon Sq. in order I hope. & paint it, I daresay with Roger's help. But anyhow I shall see you very soon if you come to Asheham the following Tuesday. If you've free by any chance prickly you could come to tea with me on Friday? but you're probably engaged. You might find me covered with paint. an unusual sight.

The flamingos are not to be had anywhere & never breed in captivity - Isn't it a blow?

Love VB

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

Spring April 1917
(24)

Charleston
Firle Tuesday

My Billy.
I hope it didn't matter our not turning up on Sunday. Duncan & I meant to come, but found we were so late starting that we should not get to you little after tea. & to tell you the truth we rather dreaded the return journey at night in a high wind & no moon. Clive & Mary actually started out to walk to you but didn't get so far. Bunny wasn't here, having gone to Wissett to get his bees.
The M.S. is at Gordon Sq. & Clive will send it to you by registered post when he goes back there.
It will be very good of Lemard if he really doesn't mind taking the trouble to see about it. I think it's true it would much better be done by someone on the spot.

It will be very exciting when you actually set up your press. Tell me if you want us to do any marbled papers for you. I expect I shall come to London some time not very far off & perhaps I could then come to you for a night or so.. which would be much the best way of seeing you.

I had a long talk with old Lumley about Jos before she left. That letter was from him. In reply to me she had written to condole on the death of Felix. I think she is still in love & evidently he has behaved very unkindly. Perhaps its true she's rather sentimental, but then she's always so hopelessly at sea about everyone else's feelings etc & so remote from reality in all her dealings with people. I think that's the reason of it but I think she's really unhappy at times poor old thing! Its a melancholy fate to be a school teacher all one's days.

Please write a long letter full of scrap as soon as you know my answers and very soon as necessary to you at present

(77c)

? 10 May 1917

Charleston
Firle

Thursday

My Billy.
I have been away staying with Roger at Guildford or I should have written before. So it was you who sent Julian the book. He was delighted with it & it has been specially useful as he hasn't been able to walk the last few days having got a very bad thorn into his foot. So far it has been quite impossible to get it out. But I hope we shall succeed soon. Thank you very much. I have now succeeded in getting a very good book out of Roger about birds & animals etc. also some simple scientific things which I think will keep him going for the present. so don't bother. When I come to London again I can look about for others.

Are you coming to Askeham soon? You don't know what you're missing now. We have had lots of daffodils & now our other plants are beginning to show.

Also all the fruit blossom is coming out & is perfectly lovely in the walled garden. So far our vegetables consist of nettles & dandelions (nettles are very good) but rows of peas & beans & potatoes are beginning to appear. I do quite a lot of digging & weeding.

I hear you have met Ottoline again. What did you think of her? She seemed to have been altogether overcome by you. The only person left alive by the war more wonderful than ever. etc. etc. I suppose you will go to Sassington next. You really ought to, once at any rate. Do write & tell me what happened with the Toad. You certainly must keep up with all those ghosts. I had a long letter from Maisie today, full of faithful friendship & apologies for sending the children to school - the chief reason for doing so being that it agrees with their health to be well - only Janet it is true has had influenza, whooping cough pneumonia, measles, chicken pox etc since she has been there - Halford is really wonderful - a little slow, but a poet - bee-orchises on the downs,

77c ii

light breaking through the darkness, invitations & so there & proposals to come here - I think I shall have to have her here, though I don't know what they think of this household.

We have had no visitors since Clive & Mary but Maynard. I'm thinking of asking the Shoves soon. But it has been very nice having us one & being able to paint at one's ease.

Is your printing press mended & have you succeeded in separating n's from h's. Don't pore over it all day or you'll see n's & h's wherever you look. Remember you still must keep some wits with which to do justice to me. I'm hoping to read that work.

Will you go & see the show of copies at the Omega & write & tell me what you think of them? Do send us detailed criticisms of all the works - & look in your gossip. Love from Nessa & yours [redacted] sister. V.B

78

1917
Tues

Charleston
Firle
June 5

My Billy.

Presents from you arrived by every post. First a ~~loaf~~ cake, then a loaf, then a book. The cake & loaf were simply heavenly & the book I am reading with great interest. You know my tastes in literature, don't you? simple & domestic. What a mercy not to read about the war nor yet the usual descriptions of Ka's evenings. Who is St Clement Danes?

However I don't think you should take it upon yourself to give me everyone's presents. We

have just had the Shores for the week end. She was very nice & very amusing. especially in imitating Kain. We talked endlessly about the Fishers of course - She says she hates them almost as much as I do, but as a matter of fact she likes them nearly all individually very much. The week end was rather agitating as Julian had one of the usual accidents & cut his foot very badly on some glass. Hatch had just gone to London. so I had to look after him. & as she hasn't yet come back for some unknown reason, I still have to. However, he's really all right, only he can't walk yet, but at the moment

it was alarming as he bled so much I thought he must have cut an artery & he yelled at the top of his voice & made it almost impossible to do anything. Children certainly give one a lively time of it!

Duncan & I think of coming up to do Mary's room on Saturday week & working at it all Sunday. Could you have us then? Perhaps you're going away for the week end. in which case of course it's really quite easy for us to stay at Gordon Sq.

But Duncan can get away then without asking for a day off which is rather difficult now that he's only doing half time.

I wish you could come
here some time - If you
could come for 2 nights
we could get through quite
a lot of gossip. Besides
its so lovely now. Roses
are coming out fast &
its really making up for
that awful winter you
didnt notice. Julian
caught 2 eels yesterday
& a large fish was hooked
but not landed by Bunny.
You should fish all day
Next week end we have
Clive, Mary & I think Lytton.

Yours
V. B

1917

Charleston
Folk July 4

My Billy

Thank you very much for getting the icing sugar. I'd be very glad if you'd get me 1 lb a week as long as you can. It will do quite well if you bring it when you come. I hope you won't be depriving yourself by getting it for me. If so don't get it.

Oh dear. How awful - if after all I haven't got servants for May but only mice again pinched her from her! But it is no good. I see our chances

are quite as important as
servants'. I shall never
set food more unless she
manages to reach Virgin
pastures some where -
However its a blessing for
I / have such reputations
though when they found all
denounce me as an
immoral woman I can't
think. Then I can't help
selfishly hoping you'll get
Ethel. as Jessie would
be very much pleased
to have her at Ashburn
But I also do think she'd
do anything you wanted
& be immaculate as
your servant. Don't believe
anything Mary H. may say
about her. as I see she's no

judge whatever of characters
Ethel's not exciting but
worthy to a degree. will
keep you clean & tidy.
mend your clothes &
be scrupulously conscientious
The cook of course I
don't know. except that
I could see she was a good
cook. She was rather stiff
in her manner & called
me Madam. but no doubt
you'd soon shake her out
of it. I should tell her
at the beginning how much
you want the books to
be & I expect she'd then
take an interest in
making them that. No
doubt she'd be anxious to
stay with you, having had

this experience with Mary.
Jessie never told me about
Ethel. I heard it all from
Tissie. Well, this is
all domestic too, but do-
mestic matters are so
interesting aren't they?
Do you know we have
only 17 ducks left out
of 32 - rats, disease,
disappearance. account for
the rest. Isn't it awful?
Do come here on your way
to Ashburn. When will
that be? Any time will
do for us - come for as long
as you can. I don't think
we shall do Mary's room
room just yet. perhaps
not till she goes away, when
we could possibly live in her
house and let ours which would
be an advantage. Love VB

T. PARSONS 8.2.23